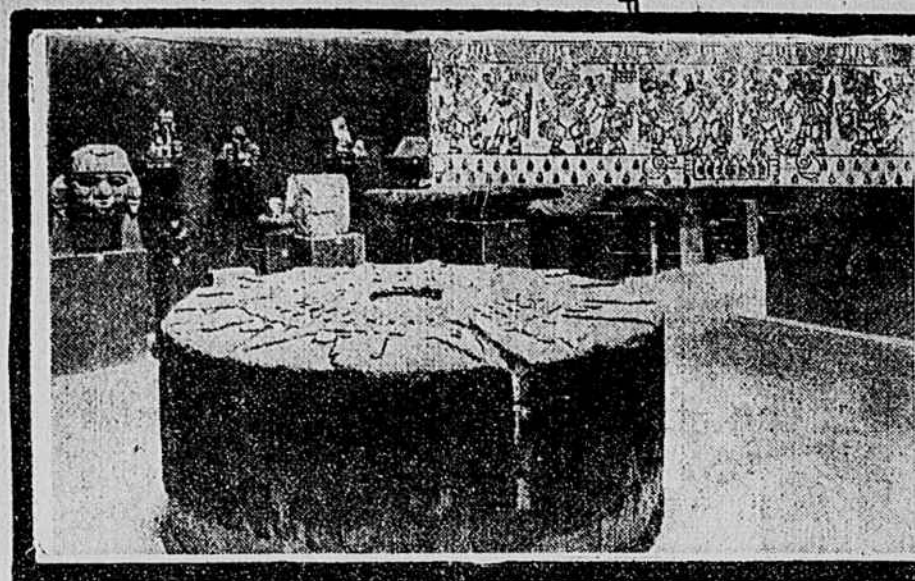


# BLOODY MEXICO; TRAVELS AMONG AZTECS, PAST AND PRESENT



The Sacrificial Stone, upon which 70,000 were killed in one day. Sketch at the top shows engraving on the side of the stone.

MEXICO might be called a land of blood. It was so in the days of the Aztecs. It was so many times during the days of the Spaniards and it has been so during these terrible days of Madero and Huerta. In this letter I write of the bloody times of the past. I have just come from the National Museum, where I have photographed the sacrificial stone which was in use when Cortez came, and which was one of the bloodiest shrines upon earth.

The bloody shrine, and I mean it. This stone, so small that it would not fill the parlor of a flat renting for \$20 a month, has been the site of more battles than any other spot of its size in the world. Upon it have flowed streams of blood greater than those of the recent war between Bulgaria and Turkey, and all the deaths of the present revolution here are nothing in comparison with those who have died on this block of granite. It was upon it that the Spaniards saw the Aztecs kill their captured brothers. The fight between the Spaniards and the Mexicans was at its height when Cortez saw the Aztec priests lead the Spanish captives up the steps of the mighty mound which stood just above where this stone now rests and lay them upon it, preparatory to cutting out their hearts. The captives were stripped to their waists, and Cortez could tell them by the contrast of their white skins against those of their copper-colored masters. The Spaniards' heads were adorned with feathers, and they were made to dance as they went up. As soon as they were stripped, their naked bodies were laid upon this stone. Then came a flash of the knife, and a moment later the priests held up their bloody hearts and threw them to that horrid idol, the Aztec god of war, which you may see here against the wall in this same museum.

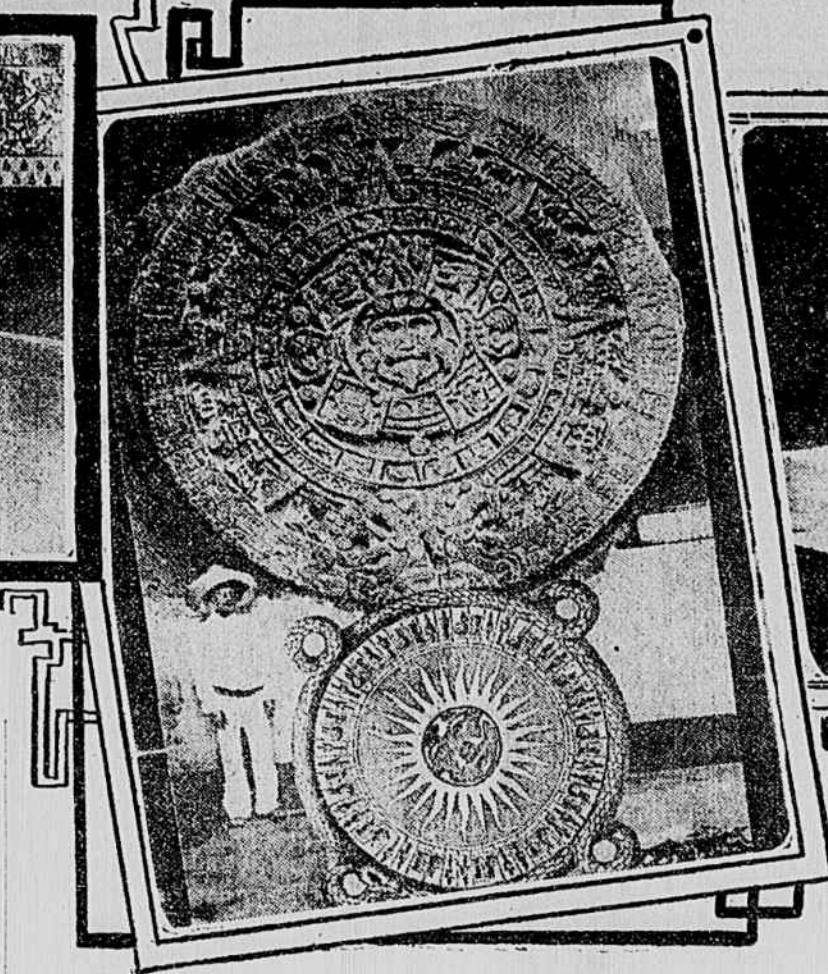
The archaeologists are now working on the history of these ancient times. They are finding new tablets bearing hieroglyphics, and the exploration is going on among the ruined cities as far south as the ruins of Palenque. I have already written of the work our archaeological society is doing at Quirigua.

That relates to the Mayans. The Aztecs came later, and we have better information as to them. Their records show that 72,000 captives were killed on this sacrificial stone in one day. That was shortly before Columbus discovered America. The prisoners were selected by lot, and they formed a procession about two miles long. In one of the buildings near the Teocalli, the great altar of the Aztecs, the Spaniards with Cortez found 136,000 skulls, taken from those who had been thus killed. Among them were men, women and children.

On the Sacrificial Stone.

But let me tell you how the stone looks. We know it is authentic, for the records say that it was thrown down by Cortez, and thus became a part of the ruins of Montezuma's capital. That was over 400 years ago. The stone lay buried for more than three centuries, but about 100 years ago it was dug up, and the authorities ordered it to be broken to pieces, that it might be used for paving the city. One of the priests objected, however, and it was saved.

There is nothing that brings one closer to the Aztecs than the stone. The stone is perfectly round, and its rim is covered with carvings. In the center of the top is a hole as big as a tin wash basin, with a groove running out to the rim. That hole was used to catch the blood of the victims which flowed over through the groove into a great stone bowl, which also is here to be seen. The Aztecs had a ritual concerning their sacrifices, and the most distinguished of the captives were often given a chance to fight for their lives. Separate and apart from the stone of sacrifice was a gladiatorial stone with a ring in its top, upon which the captives, stripped to the skin, fought under the eyes of the King and other spectators. He was chained to the stone and given a wooden sword and shield. Thus equipped he contended with a soldier, who was armed with a sword of obsidian, a glasslike substance made from a kind of volcanic lava. The obsidian weapon had a razorlike edge, and the contest consequently was very unequal. Never-



The great Calendar Stone, which weighs fifty tons. Aztec Calendar below.

less, the wooden sword sometimes prevailed, and the man won his freedom. If he failed or was wounded his body was carried to the stone of sacrifice, and there offered to the war god of the Aztecs.

Aztec Cruelties Past and Present.

Standing beside this stone and looking back into the past, the cruelties perpetrated by the rebels of to-day in some of the mountain districts are not strange. The stories have not been published in the American papers, but they come from reliable sources. In one case, for instance, some brigands, having captured their enemy, stripped him to the skin, tied him to a tree and then shot at him again and again. They were careful of their aim so as to wound but not kill. After the man was cut almost to pieces by the bullets he was taken down and his legs being tied by ropes to two different horses, he was torn apart. That was the work of the half-breed descendants of the Aztecs.

The full-blooded Aztecs of four centuries ago had tortures equally cruel, and their most famous sacrifice was typical of them. This occurred once every year, when the most handsome youth that could be found was the victim. It was necessary that he should be physically perfect, and the priests who made the selection insisted on his being without blemish and in possession of all the graces of youth. He was chosen a year prior to the sacrifice, and from that time until his death

he lived like a prince. He was wine and dined and had four of the most beautiful girls in the land as his mistresses. He was the great young man of his time, and with music and feasting upon flowery beds of ease he rode gaily to his doom.

When the final day came he said good-by to his sweethearts, and, decorated with flowers, took his place on this sacrificial stone. Then the priests, dressed in red, drove their knives into his breast and pulled out his heart. They held it aloft before the eyes of the multitude and they fell on their knees and shouted out their adoration. Later on the body was cut into pieces and distributed to the more favored of the people, who cooked and served it on their dining tables as the tid-bit of the year.

Cannibalism Among the Aztecs.

Prescott is my authority that this was the only kind of cannibalism that was practiced by the Aztecs, and he says that the cannibal feasts were served up in royal style. The cooking was done by the best of the culinary artists, and men and women came together to discuss the horrible menu.

Human sacrifices began in Mexico two or three hundred years before the Spaniards landed, and at the time of the conquest it has been estimated that the annual sacrifices were about 50,000. In addition to the Teocalli in Mexico City, there were pyramids and mounds in different parts of the country, and even though increased in number when- ever drought, plagues or other calamities came.

An Aztec God.

The idol in whose honor much of the sacrifice took place was the god of war and of bloodshed, whose chief representation is here in the National Museum. This is a block of stone nine feet in height covered with carving. It represents a squat figure with a great flat head, out of the top of which peeps two cylindrical eyes, above four little horns which serve as the nose. The mouth is large and the head rests without a neck on the shoulders. This statue stood not far from the sacrificial stone when Cortez, in company with King Montezuma, first saw it. It was then covered with gold and studded with jewels. Golden serpents were wound about its waist, and a necklace of human heads and hearts, life-size, made of gold and silver, encircled the neck. Before it a pan of incense was burning, and in this pan the hearts of three human beings were roasting. After the Spaniards had conquered, they tore off the gold, silver and jewels. They threw down the statue, and it was years later that it was brought forth as an archaeological relic.

Mexico City Excavations.

The Mexicans of to-day are thoroughly alive to the archaeological possibilities of their own country.



Stone tiger recently found in excavating a Mexican sewer. This came from back of the Cathedral.

They are anxious to have it explored, and have given concessions to foreign designers to do much of the work. Not a few have been given to Americans connected with the Smithsonian Institution and our societies of archaeology, and they have made great discoveries. The Mexicans themselves have done a great deal. Their work began with a viceroys who lived more than 100 years ago. He ordered that all the relics dug up in Mexico City should be sent to the university and from there they came to the National Museum. Maximilian was also interested in such investigations, and Diaz encouraged them.

There is no doubt but that a great many interesting things still lie under the Mexican capital. Every time a new sewer is dug or a great foundation excavated, something new is discovered. I have before me a print made by Mr. Waite, the American photographer, of a great stone tiger, which was unearthed a year or so ago, and he tells me that he frequently makes pictures of similar objects, which come from the drainage and sewer excavations. The sacrificial stone was found buried near the southwest corner of the cathedral, and the Aztec calendar stone, which is also in the museum, was originally found under the earth in the great plaza. When it was taken up the Archbishop of Mexico feared that it might be worshipped by the Indians, and he ordered that it be buried again. Later on it was again excavated and cemented onto the base of one of the cathedral towers, where it remained until twenty-seven years ago, at which time it was removed to the museum.

How They Kept the Time.

This calendar stone gives some idea of the advanced civilization possessed by the Aztecs. It was used as a sun dial and calendar, and the hieroglyphs upon it are supposed to represent the years, months and days. The archaeologists disagree as to the exact meaning of some of the hieroglyphs, but certain figures are thought to correspond with the year A. D. 1,770, and others show that the ancient Indians knew how to adjust their festivals by the movements of the heavenly bodies.

They were able to fix the length of the tropical year even better than the philosophers of antiquity, and they had means of settling the hours of the day with precision and the times of the solstices and equinoxes.

This calendar stone, originally weighed about fifty tons, and the records show that it came from over the mountains, a distance of many leagues. The Aztecs had neither horses nor oxen, and it must have been carried by men.

Aztec Civilization.

This museum shows that the Aztecs had a higher civilization than is generally supposed. They had their own literature, the most of which was destroyed by the Spaniards. They used picture writings, and much of their science and customs were committed to manuscript, many rolls of such manuscripts having been burnt by the Spaniards. They knew how to make

paper, and they used cotton clothing. They had fairs for the encouragement of trade and agriculture, and they were expert workers in metal. Some of the articles carried to Spain by Cortez were vessels of gold, silver and copper, and among them some silver basins so big that they could not be encircled by the arms of a man. They made dyes like the Tyrian purple and they wove cloth out of the fur of rabbits.

They Were High Livers.

The records show that the Aztecs ate at tables, using silver and gold plates, and that they had chafing dishes to keep their meats warm. They had smoked cigarettes after dinner. They had good cooks and ate all kinds of vegetables, fruits and meats. Montezuma had fish brought to him from the ocean over the mountains, a distance of 200 miles, by fast runners, and the Spaniards say that the markets of the capital contained domestic poultry, game from the mountains, fish from the lakes, fruits of the temperate and tropical zones, and also green vegetables. The market stalls were decorated with flowers, and the market throng was so great that it usually numbered about 40,000. Cortez says the multitude was three times as great as that of the market at Salamanca, and also that the cloths, tapestry, etc., made him think of the silk markets at Granada.

One part of the market was assigned to the goldsmiths, another to toy peddlers, and others to pottery and the sellers of copper and obsidian, of which the razors and mirrors were made. There were also drug shops, paper shops and places selling blankbooks and maps.

A Toltec Marcus Aurelius.

As it is now, there are perhaps 12,000,000 of the descendants of these people who cannot read or write. They are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and their future is one of the big problems of Mexico. There is no doubt, however, but that they have natural ability, for the greatest men of modern Mexico have had more or less Indian blood in their veins. President Juarez was an Indian, and President Diaz had Indian ancestors. The records show that some of the ancient Indian emperors wrote poetry and philosophy, and there is one, Nezahualcoyotl, whose utterances make you think of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus of the Proverbs of Solomon. This man was a Toltec. He belonged to the nation which preceded the Aztecs and he revolutionized the laws and government of Mexico during his reign. Here is a quotation from one of his poems which has been translated into Spanish and then into English. It reminds one of the verse in Ecclesiastes, viii, 15, which recommended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the

sun than to eat, drink and to be merry."

This is the way the ancient Aztecs puts it:

"Banish care! If there are bounds to pleasure, the saddest life must also have an end. Then weave the chaplet of flowers, sing thy songs in the praise of the all-powerful God, for the glory of the world soon fadeth! Rejoice in the green freshness of thy spring, for the day will come when thou shalt sigh for these joys in vain; when the sceptre shall pass from thy hand and the sons of thy nobles drink the dregs of distress. Yet, the remembrance of the just shall not pass away from the nations and the good thou has done shall ever be held in honor. The goods of this life, its glories and riches, are but lent to us. Its substance is but an illusory shadow, and the things of to-day shall change on the morrow. Then gather the flowers from thy garden to bind round thy brows and seize the joys of to-day."

This same man, like the Athenians of the time of St. Paul, erected a temple to the unknown god. He was a sort of Mexican David, and was like Solomon in that he loved beautiful women. With other things he coveted the wife of one of his officers, and even as David did to Uriah, he put this officer in the front of the battle and thus took his widow to wife. Is it not strange how the lines of great lives, even though they be divided by ages of time and by thousands of miles of water and land, and even by worlds which are unknown one to the other, sometimes run side by side?

Death Comes to All.

This same man, who came of the race which built many of the pyramids of Mexico, had equally graphic ideas of death. I shall tell one of his expressions close this letter. It reads:

"The world is nothing but a sepulchre, and there is nothing that lives on its surface that shall not be entombed beneath it. The things of yesterday are no more to-day, and the things of to-day shall cease, perhaps, on the morrow. The glories that have been have all passed away like the fearful smoke that issues from the throat of Popocatepetl, with no other existence of a record than the page of a chronicle. The great, the wise, the valiant and the beautiful Ahaz, who are they now? That which has befallen them shall happen to us and to those that come after us. The horrors of the tomb are but the cradle of the sun, and the dark shadows of death are brilliant lights for the stars." (Copyright, 1913, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

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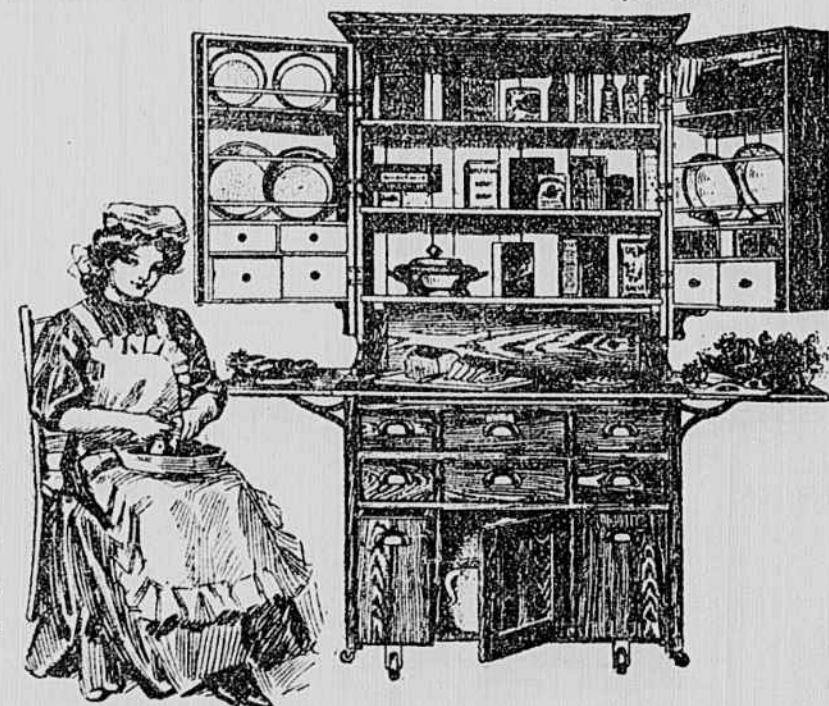
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